

1100 P
979.5
B964

WUP
979.5
B964

Living Age
Sept. 13, 1845

From the Platte (Mo.) Argus of Aug. 2d.

OREGON.

LETTER FROM PETER H. BURNET, ESQ.

THE following letter was received yesterday by a citizen of this county, from Mr. Burnet, by the way of Oahua, and forwarded by the American consul. The details will be deemed interesting by his old friends and neighbors, and are indeed of importance to all who take an interest in the affairs of Oregon.

Falatiné Plains, Oregon, Nov. 4, 1844.

* * * The emigrants are now daily arriving, and will all be here in a few weeks at farthest, and I expect to receive other letters and papers, which I am informed are on the way. I have now an opportunity to write a hasty letter, as one of H. B. Co.'s ships, the Columbia, leaves Vancouver in a few days, for the Sandwich Islands.

Our country is most beautiful, fertile and well watered, with the most equable and pleasant climate. Our population is rapidly increasing, and the country is making great progress in wealth and refinement. I have never yet before seen a population so industrious, sober and honest as this. I know many, very many young men, who were the veriest vagabonds in the states, who are here respectable and doing exceedingly well. Our crops the past year (1844) have been most bountiful, and we have not only a full supply of wheat for our consumption, but a large quantity for exportation. Large numbers of cattle are raised here, which are never fed or sheltered. Many men have from three to four hundred head of cattle. Sheep can be had here in any desirable number, as the H. B. Company have a large flock, and many private individuals have them.

Ere this reaches you perhaps you will have learned that we have a regular government in most successful operation in Oregon. When I first reached this region, about a year ago, I thought any attempt at organization might be premature. I had not, however, been here long, before I was convinced that a government of some kind was inevitable. It grew out of stern, inevita-

ble necessi
sactions w
occurring
"claims";
daily devo
crimes we
eipled, the
trampling
able. A
were, coul
thing was
a governm

We had
of the leg
do. We
and permi
chose so t
we debarre
tiff. At t
all *bonâ fî*
of 640 acre
Nearly all
tation. W
Joseph L.
the mount
or ten yea
popular, ar
first warra
for the ap
turbulent
axe, but M
the fellow
of serious
of Joel Tu
of Clay co
and a warr
Turnham
monds was
resisted wi
had a pist
shot Turn
above the
These are
of justice
was fully
he had no
pursued hi

We have
the Circuit
We have b
of probate
fact we hav
of the peac
as provision
ment could
laws of To
and not mo

We are
result of P
ernments h
them, the
be one un
convention
(republican
ment put
compel us
country ar
government
never do ar
for ourselv
delay, and
intolerable.
you know

ble necessity. Our commercial and business transactions were considerable. Difficulties were daily occurring between individuals in relation to their "claims;" the estates of deceased persons were daily devoured, and helpless orphans plundered; crimes were committed, and the base and unprincipled, the reckless and turbulent were hourly trampling upon the rights of the honest and peaceable. A civilized population, numerous as we were, could not exist without government. The thing was impossible. We, therefore, organized a government of our own.

We had no money, no means—I was a member of the legislature. I had most of the business to do. We passed a tax-bill, appointed an assessor, and permitted every man not to pay a tax, if he chose so to do, but if he did not pay, being able, we debarred him from suing in the courts as plaintiff. At the same time we passed acts to protect all *bonâ fide* settlers in their claims to the amount of 640 acres. The tax-bill operated like a charm. Nearly all the whole population paid without hesitation. We selected a tall East Tennesseean, Joseph L. Meek, for our sheriff. He had been in the mountains with William L. Sublette for eight or ten years, is exceedingly good humored, very popular, and as brave as Julius Cæsar. The very first warrant he had delivered to him, was issued for the apprehension of a very quarrelsome and turbulent man, who resisted Meek with a broad-axe, but Meek, presenting a cocked pistol, took the fellow *nolens volens*. The next, and only case of serious resistance to our laws, was on the part of Joel Turnham, of Mo., son of May Turnham, of Clay county. He had assaulted an individual, and a warrant was issued by a justice of the peace. Turnham was himself constable, and John Edmonds was deputized to arrest him. Turnham resisted with a large butcher's knife, but Edmonds had a pistol with six barrels well charged. He shot Turnham four times, the last ball entering above the temple, when he immediately expired. These are all the obstructions to the administration of justice we have had, and in Edmonds' case, he was fully justifiable in killing Turnham, even if he had no warrant, as T. assaulted him first, and pursued him with great violence to the last.

We have now five counties, and two terms of the Circuit Court in each county in every year. We have but one judge, who discharges the duty of probate judge, chancellor, and what not; in fact we have only as yet circuit courts and justices of the peace. Our government was intended only as provisional, to exist until some regular government could be established. We adopted the statute laws of Iowa, where applicable to our condition and not modified by our legislature.

We are now waiting most anxiously for the result of Pakenham's mission, and if the two governments have not settled the question between them, the moment that fact is known, there will be one universal movement made. A regular convention will be held and a constitution adopted, (republican no doubt,) and an independent government put in operation at once. Necessity will compel us to the step. The population of this country are no doubt desirous to live under the government of the United States, but if she will never do anything for us, we must and will do it for ourselves. The people here are worn out by delay, and their condition becomes every day more intolerable. I speak to you with great candor, for you know me, and know that I withhold nothing

and disguise nothing. We are well satisfied that the United States government, as well as Great Britain, could not object, and would not object, if we form an independent government for ourselves, situated as we are. Treaties must be made with the Indians, and many other things of importance must of necessity be done.

Our population about doubles every year, and our business troubles. We will soon have a printing-press, and a paper of our own; we can then publish our laws.

The practice of the law has commenced, and I have several important suits on hand.

I have a fine "claim," perhaps among the best in Oregon, situated in the centre of one of the most beautiful prairies called the Falatine Plains. I am in excellent health, contented and happy. Mrs. B.'s health has improved, and my children are all well, fat and fine.

Your friend,

PETER H. BURNET.

HEAT AND COLD—AMERICA AND PERSIA.—By the last accounts from the United States the heat appears to have been intense. The 13th of July has already acquired the soubriquet of "the hot Sunday," the thermometer having reached 98 degrees, in the shade, at three P. M. There are strange accounts of the weather from Erzroom. On the 21st of June a heavy snow storm set in, which lasted for eight and forty hours. The thermometer fell to 27½ degrees Fahrenheit. The snow in the town itself was a foot and a half deep, and on the tops of the mountains four or five feet. The weather in the Black Sea was at the time wintry and dreadful. Many persons perished by the capizing of boats; and it is apprehended that the blockading squadron of Russia, on the coast of Abascia, will have suffered.

FLEMISH BURIAL CUSTOMS.—At Willsbeek, Vyve, St. Bavon, and other villages near Courtrai, a curious custom is observed, which obtains in other parts of Belgium. When a person dies, the clergy of the parish come in procession to conduct the body to the place of interment. If on their way they come to a spot where four roads meet, the bearers of the coffin set down their load, kneel in silence, and utter a short prayer. Their reason for doing so, arises from the belief that those who have quitted this world may yet return to it; but, as there might be some difficulty in the dead man finding his way home again, his friends pray for him in the cross roads, that he may hit upon the path the more readily, and not be misled by evil spirits—"Kwaedgeesten." But at Oostmallen, near Turnhout, a far more extraordinary custom exists, for which it would be difficult to assign a satisfactory reason. When the husband dies, his widow seats herself astride upon the bier, and in this demonstrative manner accompanies the corpse to the grave!—*Castello's Valley of the Meuse.*

MUTUAL WRONG.—Mr. James, the novel-spinner, has, by advertisement, offered the sum of ten pounds' reward to whosoever will "prove whence the report first emanated," that he—Mr. James—had "undertaken to edit the periodical work, called, *Ainsworth's Magazine*." We understand that the proprietors of the said Magazine have offered a like sum for the detection of the offender. Both parties feel themselves equally injured.—*Punch.*